Typical Elders and Deacons

James M. Campbell

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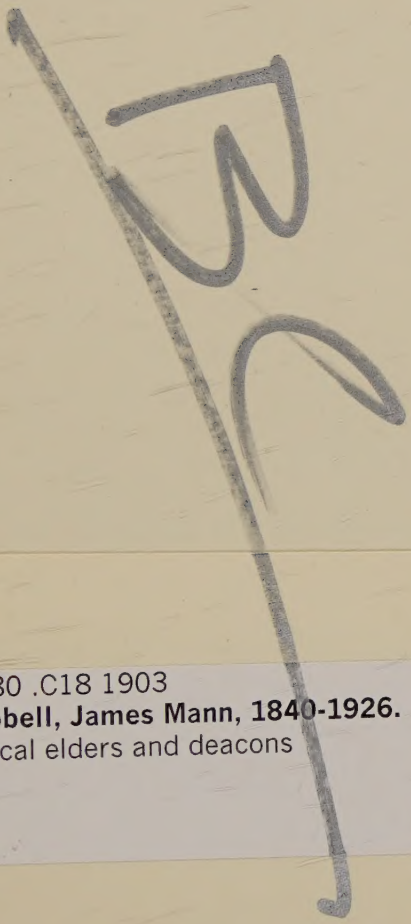

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Typical elders and deacons

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Typical Elders and Deacons

BY

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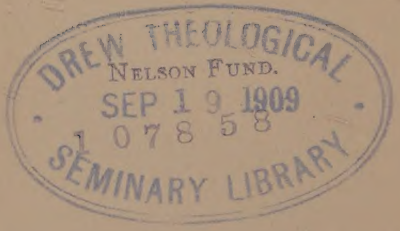

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FOREWORD

THE typical deacon of the modern novel is a man of small caliber—something of a sneak, very much of a hypocrite. He is proud of his title, is much given to cant, and has a habit of calling upon his apprentice to sand the sugar, water the molasses, and then come in to prayers. Of noble, manly qualities he is utterly destitute. A more despicable character it would be difficult to imagine.

This wicked, senseless caricature of an honorable class of men can not be too hotly repudiated. Elders and deacons of this type may have occasionally been found, but as a class they represent something of what is best in the life of the church. They are elected to office because of moral qualifications, combined with special fitness. Seldom is the service which they render to the church, and through the church to the community, duly appreciated. They give freely of their time and strength and money for the

support of the church, looking for nothing again save the reward that consists in the consciousness of duty done. Their work is grandly unselfish. Often when exhausted with business cares they leave their comfortable homes to attend to the affairs of the church, making in quiet and unostentatious ways sacrifices which, if made in other spheres of public service, would cover them with glory. The only adequate explanation of their unrequited toil is that it is done "in His Name."

The writer of the following composite sketches can not refrain from embracing the present opportunity of giving expression to his personal thankfulness for the priceless friendships and invaluable services of the elders and deacons with whom it has been his privilege to be associated in the work of the Lord. In his "Te Deum Laudamus" to "the glorious company of the apostles," "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," and "the noble army of martyrs" who praise the Lord, he would add *the exalted brotherhood of elders and deacons;* for in the galaxy of Christ's witnesses none occupy a higher place than they.

Typical Elders and Deacons

I

AN IDEAL DEACON

WHEN I first met Deacon Wilson he had reached the sunset of life. Golden tints were in the declining sky. He had grown old gracefully. He was one of those happy people whom a curious old French book describes as "Persons who have lived for ages and grown young again." He had drunk deep at the fountain of eternal youth. Had he been self-conscious, which, happily, he was not, he might have said, with the poet:

> "I am not old,
> For in my heart a fountain flows
> And round it pleasant thoughts repose—
> And sympathies and feelings high
> Spring like the stars in evening sky."

I was in my callow days, a newly fledged theolog who had not shed his pin-feathers. What

the friendship of this good man was to me in those formative days God alone knows. The bond between us was like that between father and son. Timothy could not have looked up to Paul with greater regard than I looked up to my saintly deacon. I went to him with all my troubles, laid before him all my problems. His skilful, patient fingers unraveled many a tangled skein; his sympathy was a cordial for my weary heart. I always left his presence refreshed and comforted. Oh, the tender touch of those loving hands which were laid upon my youthful head in benediction! I can feel their soothing influence to-day, after the lapse of years not a few.

The marked feature in Deacon Wilson's broad, square face was his liquid hazel eyes, which resembled those of a fawn. What wells of tenderness lay in their secret depths! When lit up with sympathy they had a melting, dissolving look that flooded the coldest heart with a breath of summer heat. And yet on occasion they could flare up with an indignation that was terrible to behold. Never will I forget a scene to which I was an unwilling witness.

A neighboring farmer had called on his way

from the village to hand the Deacon his mail. "Well, John, what about that mortgage which you hold upon the Widow Allen's place? Is it true that you are going to foreclose and sell her out?"

"I dunno see, Deacon, but that the law must take its course," was the shamefaced reply.

"The law? What law? The law of God, which is the law of love?"

"I was referring to the law of the land," was the stammering reply. "You know, Deacon, that business is business, and every man is entitled to have his rights; nobody can be more sorry for Widow Allen than I am, but then you know that a man must protect himself."

"Protect himself!" exclaimed the Deacon, raising himself upon his elbow; "what about protecting the fatherless and the widow? You are a rich man, John. You have no children of your own to provide for, and the Lord will not hold you guiltless if you bear hard upon the widow in her hour of misfortune. Poor woman, she has been struck by an avalanche of trouble. Two years' bad crops and sickness in the family with heavy doctor's bills to pay took the heart out of

her husband, and he died, crushed beneath his burden."

"I know it," broke in the conscience-stricken man, "and I wish to goodness I saw some way out, but business is business."

"Yes, and religion is religion; and what is a man's religion worth if it does not affect his business? John, you are a member of the church, you profess to follow Christ; are you, in this matter, conforming your life to the golden rule?"

"I am afraid the golden rule won't work in business," was the reply.

"If it will not, it is high time for us to give our religion up. But I tell you it is the rule by which you will be judged at last. What will you answer, my friend, when the Judge says to you at last: 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to the Widow Allen, ye did it not unto me.'"

As I looked into those blazing eyes of the Deacon there broke upon me for the first time the meaning of those enigmatical words: "The wrath of the Lamb." There is no anger so hot as that of outraged love. But all at once the Deacon's tone was altered, and reaching out his

wasted hand, he put it in the horny palm of his neighbor, saying: "John, we two have been good friends; we have walked together to the house of God, we have sat at the same communion-table. I am now about to leave you for a time. Let me entreat you as a brother beloved to play the Christian, make of your business a Gospel of good will, and act in this matter as you will wish you had done when we meet above."

It is needless to say that Widow Allen's mortgage was not foreclosed. The hand-bills announcing the sale of her stock, which were in the hands of the printer, were destroyed. The widow has her farm still, and her children call John Long their second father.

There was just enough infirmity of nature in the Deacon to remind one that he was human. There was about him a suggestion of an underlying granite hardness, but the rock was covered with ivy. You felt that he would have been a harsh man if grace had not conquered nature. There was also in times of excitement a suggestion of deep subterranean fires which but for the presence of some restraining influence might have belched forth like a torrent of burning

lava. Strength of conviction sometimes passed over into stubbornness; sweet reasonableness was sometimes inconsistently compounded with obstinacy. But if by chance a bitter word escaped the warder of his lips it hurt himself more than it hurt the person to whom it was spoken. Never did penitent in spiked shoes and shirt of hair perform severer penance for his misdeeds. It would be pleasant to record that his failings always leaned to virtue's side; but they did not; yet his friends loved him none the less because of them.

The last act of the Deacon's life was characteristic of the man. Jeanie Morris, a neighbor's daughter, had gone astray. She had been a member of his Sunday-school class, and he not only followed her with his prayers and sympathies, but contrived at times to reach her with some tender message. He would allow no hard word to be spoken against her. He felt that if she had sinned, still more had she been sinned against. For her fair-voiced deceiver who, after compassing her ruin, cast her away as a withered flower, he had words of hottest indignation which, had the scoundrel been present, it might

have been for the good of his soul to hear. When he felt that his end was approaching, he said, falling back into the Scotch Doric of his boyhood: "I canna dee until the puir lamb cames back to the fold."

The Deacon had his wish. Something in the message which he sent her touched her heart. Turning her back in guilty terror upon her sinful past, she fled from the city to her country home. It was after midnight on one of the stormiest nights of the year when a shadow was seen passing before the window of the sick-room. The Deacon gave orders to open the door, when the wanderer rushed in, and, kneeling by the bed, poured out the sorrow of her stricken soul. "I was waiting for ye," were the first words which he spoke. Tenderly and skilfully did he bind up the broken heart; and the last act of his life was the bringing father and daughter together.

Dead? No! Deacon Wilson is not dead. No man who walks the earth is to me more alive. He lives in God; and he lives in many a life made better by the memory of his name.

II

A DEACON NOT IDEAL

NE characteristic thing about Deacon Dennison was his smile, which was really a compromise between a smile and a smirk; other things might change, that was a fixed quantity. He wore it at weddings and funerals. The facial muscles seemed to have got fixed into an unalterable grimace. When you told him some piece of good news, he smiled; when you told him of the death of a friend, he smiled; only in the latter case the sense of the proprieties made him contract his smile to its smallest dimensions. It is a general belief that he will die with a smile, that a smile will rest upon his lifeless clay, and that he will greet the angels with a smile. Strangers felt flattered at his expressions of personal interest; but when they saw that he greeted everybody in the same way they came to discount the value of his smile.

Another characteristic was his easy-going optimism. He had a way of affirming that things

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were all right when every one knew that they were all wrong. Like the ostrich which hides its head in the sand and fails to see its pursuer, he often refused to see the difficulty he ought to have faced and tried to solve. When there was something disagreeable coming up at a church meeting, he was sure to be kept at home with a headache; when there was a hard piece of work to be done, he passed by on the other side. He followed in all things the line of the least resistance.

He was not positively, intentionally bad, but he was weak and vacillating, which, in its moral effect, often amounted to the same thing. When he ought to have been firm and decided he wobbled. He usually sat upon the fence, and slid down from that place of neutrality after a question had been settled, taking care to land on the popular side. Like the Irishman's flea, however certain you felt that you had him, when you lifted your finger he was not there. Having no mind of his own, he readily became a tool in the hands of others. They made the bullets and he fired them off, getting all the blame for whatever damage might be done. He was a stuffed figure,

a man of wax, a thing rather than a man. His attitude toward his superiors was as deferential and as accomodating as that of a foreign ambassador who said to an English nobleman: "Tell me, O illustrious stranger, what your religion is, that I may profess it while I am in your company." Like the chameleon, he took his hue from his surroundings, and hence people took knowledge of him where he had been. If he had been in the company of the godly, he talked the language of Canaan; if he had been in the company of the profane, he might unconsciously rip out an oath. He was neither as good nor as bad as he appeared to be.

Another characteristic of Deacon Dennison was dulness of ethical sense. He was stupidly good; not exactly immoral, but unmoral. He lacked that fine sensibility to ethical distinctions which belongs to highly developed natures. His moral perceptions were decidedly blunt. Hence he often did with serenity things which to others would have brought compunctious visitings of conscience. He could prevaricate with as much ease as a cat laps milk. When he fell into debt he allowed the other party to do the worrying,

while he himself slept the sleep of the just, for in some way he generally succeeded in finding an opiate to soothe his conscience. Either he had been put under peculiar strain, so that he could not help giving way, or he had been the victim of circumstances, and was to be pitied rather than blamed for his shortcomings. And when all such excuses failed to give relief, he fell back on the Antinomian position that salvation is by faith alone, irrespective of character, and that God's mercy, like a sponge, wipes out all scores, no matter how great their number or the frequency with which they are repeated. He overlooked the important qualifying truth that sin forgiven is sin forsaken.

The negro preacher who, when reading a well-known hymn, changed a single word in one of its lines, making it read: "Judge not the Lord by feeble *saints*," instead of "Judge not the Lord by feeble *sense*," blundered better than he knew. The church ought not to be judged by its poorest specimens any more than an orchard ought to be judged by its gnarliest, sourest apples. But who can tell how much worse these feeble saints would have been save for the modi-

cum of religion which they possess? That Christianity has not done more for them is attributable not to its lack of ability, but to the poor material with which it has to work, or to the limited chance which has been given to it, on account of the half-hearted surrender which has been made to its wonder-working power.

III

A LOQUACIOUS DEACON

T is said in the book of Revelation that there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. It was a good thing that Deacon Jones was not there, for it would have been impossible to have kept him quiet for that length of time. Nothing throws the good Deacon into a fever of excitement more quickly than to have a season of silence in the prayer-meeting. His constant admonition is: "Let there be no pause! Keep things going! Let all the time be occupied!"

A little girl, when asked why she talked so much in company, replied: "Because I have got so much to say." That can hardly be said of Deacon Jones. He tells all he knows—and more. The scarcity of his ideas is not more marked than the plethora of his words. With charming frankness he often admits that he speaks not to improve the people, but to improve the time. The eloquence of silence is something which he

utterly fails to appreciate. He belongs to that class whom the poet Dryden describes as those "Who think too little and talk too much." His words are from the teeth outward.

It is evident that Deacon Jones regards glibness of tongue as one of the chief signs of piety. Those who will not rise up in meeting and testify for the Lord are mercilessly scored for their shortcomings. It was refreshing, therefore, to hear a plain-spoken sister take the Deacon down when he was urging the people to take up their cross by speaking in meeting. "You and I, Deacon," she said, "like to speak in meeting. It is no cross for us to speak, but a heavy cross it would be for us to keep silent. There are others who feel no call to speak in meeting; it would not be natural or an easy thing for them to do so. Why, then, should you keep worrying them? It is by what we are far more than by what we say that we witness for the Lord."

When the Christian Endeavor movement came into our church, Deacon Jones was in his element. The question arose as to whether the young people should adopt what was called the iron-clad pledge—that is, a pledge to take part in

every meeting. Some of the sober-minded elders who believed in pledges touching matters of personal conduct did not believe in the advisability of the young people binding themselves to the performance of public religious acts. They saw in such a pledge a snare to the conscience. They thought that it would tend to make religion formal and mechanical. They thought that the solemn act of covenanting to be the Lord's was enough, and that anything more savored of legalism and "gendered to bondage." Not so Deacon Jones. He saw in the iron-clad pledge an effective instrument for enforcing duty. He was not satisfied to have every religious act a free-will offering. Instead of having the young people controlled from within by being held in the grip of eternal principles, he would have them bound down to a hard and fast set of outward rules. He had his way. And what has been the result? Not the happiest, I fear. The young people who took to that sort of thing have gone by themselves, and the more retiring and thoughtful young people, who would not surrender the liberty which they have in Christ, have been left to shift for themselves. Nor has the effect upon

the Christian Endeavorers themselves been beneficial. They have crystalized into a narrow cult, in which the gift of talking has been made the cardinal virtue. This has tended neither to modesty nor growth. Frequent pauses are needed in the true Christian life. The tree grows in time of calm. We need times of silence in which to think, to listen, and to worship. "God has so arranged the chronology of our spirits," says Dr. James Martineau, "that there shall be thousands of silent moments between the striking hours." The honest fact in the case is that the gift of speech cuts no figure whatever in a proper estimate of Christian worth. It is a purely incidental thing, and is largely a matter of temperament. When indulged in too freely it is apt to become mechanical. A man rebuked for profane swearing made answer: "Deacon, you may pray and I will swear, and neither of us mean anything by it." Truth compels us to admit that the prevailing impression regarding Deacon Jones was that he meant nothing by his public addresses to the Deity and to his fellow men. But this was hardly fair. The Deacon meant as much by them as he was capable of putting into them,

tho, in sooth, that was not a great deal. He afforded an illustration of the truth that—

> "The ocean depths are mute,
> The shallows roar."

One thing to be said for the Deacon is, that in the voluminousness of his speech in matters religious he is himself. His practise is all of a piece. He is loquacious—long-winded, the people say, about everything. Like brave Talkative in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," he is ready to say: "I will talk of things heavenly or things earthly; things moral or things evangelical; things sacred or things profane; things past or things to come; things foreign or things at home; things more essential or things circumstantial." If he does not do as much good as he imagines, he does less harm than might be expected. The people do not take him too seriously. Upon the whole, he is a well-meaning sort of a man; but sometimes, by allowing his tongue to run away with him, he does harm unwittingly. It is hardly possible for him, or for any man, to live up to his high speech. That he often comes short of his own standard ought not to count too much

against him. But he would be a stronger and a better man if he pruned his speech and cultivated the grace of silence. By setting up an artificial standard of religion, to which he himself can not easily conform, he helps to develop a small vanity, which is sufficiently marked to begin with. By talking so much about religion he runs the risk of losing the little of it which he has. For, as the Chinese proverb says, "To indulge in the consciousness of goodness is the way to loose it." With the great, good sense characteristic of him, Moody said: "It is a good deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. Lighthouses do not ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining. They just shine."

The self-confident air with which Deacon Jones buttonholes his victims would be dissipated did he really know the feeling with which his approaches are regarded. He is looked upon as something of a bore. When he can not be evaded he is listened to impatiently. When he shambles up the parsonage doorstep and rings the bell the parson's heart sinks into his boots. The sermon which he is preparing for the coming Sunday, and which, after long effort, has just

reached the point of precipitation, will have to be laid aside, while with simulated patience he hears the Deacon drool out his wearisome complaints. It must have been the visits of such a thorn in the flesh that led a busy minister to get this Scripture text printed in large, plain letters, framed and hung up in a conspicuous place in his study: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out."

IV

A SILENT DEACON

EACON WARD was called "the Silent Deacon" merely because his voice was never heard in prayer-meeting. There is a tradition to the effect that when a young man he tried to give his experience in meeting, when he was seized with stage fright. All his ideas vanished into thin air; he stood working his lips and swinging his arms, but not a word could he utter. He sat down overwhelmed with confusion and shame, and never again could he be induced to repeat the experiment.

Once afterward, when he was urged to give his experience at a revival meeting, he refused, giving as his reason, "There are privacies of the soul upon which no man has any right to intrude." He hated all display of feeling, looking upon it as the sign of a shallow nature. He was wont to say: "The less water there is in a kettle the sooner it begins to blow off steam."

There was about Deacon Ward a vast amount

of reserved power. He seldom took any part in discussions, yet his word was waited for. People would ask, "What does Deacon Ward think about this?" He was something like Moses, who was said to be slow of speech, the very opposite of his brother, Aaron, who was a silver-tongued orator. Yet it is of Moses, and not of Aaron, that it is said, "He was a man mighty in *word* and in deed." When Deacon Ward did speak, every word weighed a ton; for not only was it the expression of a strong personality, but it was backed up by actions. If his words were few, they meant much, and they always found translation into deeds. He was like the good deacon that Spurgeon tells of, who was asked to meet with some of the brethren and sisters and pray for a poor widow who was in distress. He could not come. When the meeting was in progress it was interrupted by a loud knock at the door. When the door was opened there stood a boy in a smock-frock, who said: "My father could not come to the meeting, but he sent his prayers, and they are out there in the cart." His prayers were found to be in the shape of flour, bacon, potatoes, and other sub-

stantial articles which the widow needed to relieve her necessities.

The common estimate of Deacon Ward was expressed in the words, "He is the paying, not the praying, deacon." And yet that description was hardly fair. He was a praying man, but when he prayed he entered his closet and shut the door. The statement that he was a paying deacon was certainly correct. He was a generous giver, but not an ostentatious one. He did good by stealth, and blushed to find it fame.

The worst thing that was said of Deacon Ward was that he was a slow coach. A trifle slow he undoubtedly was, but he was sure. He pulled at a heavy load like a strong and patient ox. He supplied the needed inertia to keep things from going too fast. He was not so much a drag on the wheels of progress as a check upon the excesses of radicalism. He was a born conservative, and often formed a necessary breakwater to keep the church from being swamped by new-fangled ideas.

One hardly realizes how much the silent members contribute to the strength and security of the church. The ocean waves pounding upon

the shore with thunderous noise seem to be making great havoc, but scientists tell us that the erosion caused by rains and the action of the atmosphere is from thirty to forty times greater than the effects of the ocean.

Deacon Ward wore well. He was frugal in the expenditure of his emotions. He saved his superlatives for great occasions. As the old adage runs, "He kept his breath to cool his pottage." He was long-winded in work if not in speech. If he did not run, neither did he creep. From day to day he kept on the even tenor of his way, jogging along without haste or delay. When he spoke, it was with the velvet mouth. But sometimes his silence was oppressive. Instead of the soft answer which turneth away wrath, there was the no answer which kindleth wrath. When hurt he consumed his own smoke. He suffered long and was still. It would often have been better for himself and for others if he had spoken out. Utterance would have brought him relief, and in many instances it would have helped to clear the air and bring about a better understanding.

One thing which tended to Deacon Ward's

popularity was that he was a good listener. His mind was kept open to suggestion. He was deferential to the opinion of others. He generally had his own way because he did not appear to seek it. When he died, people remembered that he never spoke ill of anybody. What they forgot was that he never spoke good of anybody. He was merely silent—silent, generally, when he ought to have been silent; but silent, sometimes, when he ought to have spoken. Still, his life was vocal, and it always rang true. The good deeds with which his life was filled were more expressive and eloquent than any words could have been. He went from us as he had lived: going out without a word, and meeting the mysteries of the unseen with the hushed reverence that his life of silence had bred.

V

A JOVIAL ELDER

ARNEY O'NEIL is a warm-hearted, impulsive Irishman. His hand-grip is like a vise. He does not wear an eternal grimace, but his round, cheery face is ready to break into a smile upon the slightest excuse. One look of his laughing eyes scatters the blues. His very presence radiates sunshine.

It is sometimes whispered by those to whom a sour visage is a sign of grace that he is not serious enough for an elder, but no open protest has ever been heard. In the presence of his popularity with the young people adverse criticism is instantly hushed—not that people doubt the genuineness of his piety, altho they might sometimes like to see it more soberly expressed. His goodness of heart and purity of life are above question.

In the meetings of the church sessions he is a thorn in the side of his brother elders. They

fear his good-natured outspokenness. By a flash of wit he often reveals the hollowness of a fine open argument. Once when a prosy brother remarked, "I merely throw out this idea," he instantly replied, "Well, I think that is the best thing you can do with it." Some men are wise and cautious in speech; others headlong in speech, but wise and cautious in action. Elder O'Neil seems to take delight in showing how near he can go to the brink of the precipice without falling over. At times it looks as if he were going to fly the traces; but after rearing and plunging for a while, he always checks himself up and settles down to a steady jog-trot.

The most serious disturbance in the church, arising from what was called the Elder's "frivolity," came about in this wise. He had a large Bible class of young people, whom he took for a picnic in the woods. After lunch, seating himself with his back against a tree, he produced his violin and began playing a waltz. The music soon got into the heels of the young people and they began to dance. The Elder encouraged them. To him the act of dancing was in these circumstances as harmless as the gamboling of lambs in

the meadow. It happened, however, that the church had a rule against dancing. Of late this rule had not been rigidly enforced, but such a flagrant violation of it could not be overlooked. The result was a church trial. The Elder was brought up before his own session, charged with conduct inconsistent with his Christian profession. In vain did he defend the innocence of the act; in vain did he contend that dancing was a question of conscience with the individual; in vain did he plead for a wider application of the principle of Christian liberty; the rules of the church were against the practise, so that was enough. A rupture in the church was imminent; but it was fortunately averted through a compromise. The Elder would not admit that he had done wrong; he would make no confession of guilt; he held that he had not exceeded the limit of the liberty which he had in Christ; yet he said that if dancing made his weak brother to offend he would dance no more while the world lasted; at the same time he deplored the weakness that found occasion of offense in anything so harmless. That was the last case of discipline of that sort in the church. The battle

for Christian freedom was then fought out and won.

One thing that troubles the people about the Elder is that they are not always sure whether he is joking or whether he is in earnest. But there are two circumstances in which they are never in doubt. The one is when he is in the sick-room. Cheerful he always is, but frivolous never. The other is when he is engaged in acts of worship. "Barney O'Neil may fool with us," some one said, "but he never fools with God." When he listens to God's Word it is with a hushed heart; when he prays he talks with God straight; when he sings he stands with bared head in the presence of the King.

The religious life of the Elder works itself out along social lines. He is a social rather than an intellectual force. No social gathering is considered complete without him. His geniality is contagious. His mirth is holy, for it is without sting. Not a little must be laid to the score of temperament; he is built that way, but his natural endowments are improved by religion. With a different ethical bent he might have been a cynic. There were things that hap-

pened in his life which but for the grace of God in the heart might have changed his honey into gall.

The consecration of the gift of humor is an aspect of Christian duty which is generally omitted. The mission of the humorist is no whit less important than that of the evangelist. To him it is given to brighten and sweeten what is dark and bitter; to lighten the load of care; to soften the hard experiences of life. A church advertising recently in an English paper for a preacher says: "He must be cheery, and manly, and able to appreciate a joke." The time may yet come when the Church will refuse to put hands of ordination upon any one desiring the office of elder or preacher who is destitute of a sense of humor.

Thanks to our Irish elder for the threads of gold which his ready wit has shot into the dull gray of our church life! His work has not been in vain in the Lord. We could spare almost any other form of ministry rather than his; for wits, like poets, are not born every day. They fill a unique place and render a unique service. "Man could direct his ways," says Sidney Smith, "by

plain reason, and support his life by tasteless food; but God has given us wit and flavors and brightness and laughter and perfumes to enliven the days of man's pilgrimage, and to charm his pained steps over the burning marl."

VI

A CHRONIC GRUMBLER

EACON SIMPSON wears a doleful aspect, and he is as doleful as he looks. He is a bird of evil omen, prophesying failure, and doing all he can to bring it about. When any scheme miscarries he is always able to say, "I told you so." He resembles a certain contentious missionary to whom Sydney Smith said: "My good fellow, when you get among your cannibal parishioners, if one of them should eat you, you will be certain to disagree with him."

Deacon Simpson is always complaining. He carries with him a chilly, repressive atmosphere. He is happy only when nursing a grievance. Fault-finding has become with him a second nature. One of the things of which he makes most frequent complaint is that when he goes to church he fails to find food for his soul. The preaching to which he is doomed to listen is not edifying. He wanders like a bird from her nest,

attaching himself to some other preacher who is said to supply him with "the simple Gospel"; but after a time he slips back to his old place, and for a brief season he cultivates the grace of silence. It so happens that his minister is one of those wise teachers who preaches truth in its Biblical proportions, and endeavors to give to each one his meat in due season. If the Deacon would only wait, his turn would come round.

When he looks around the church on Sunday mornings he sees the empty seats, but he does not see those that are filled. Nor does he take due account of the obvious limitations of the field in which the church has to work. He does not think of the shifting character of the population, of the thinning of the ranks by removals and deaths, or of the depletion which has come from the building of a new church in the neighborhood. He sees only the gaps, but does not think of their causes; he sees only what has been lost, and does not see what has been held and won. In his estimation the church is like a hill of potatoes, the best part being under ground. He is mistaken. The type of piety has changed, but the quality has kept up, and with regard to the

condition of the church there is nothing to bring discouragement. It has new and difficult problems to face, but it is meeting them bravely and wisely. It is making new adjustments; and while some shrinkage was inevitable, it is more efficient along all lines of practical work than ever it was in its entire history.

Another peculiarity of the Deacon is his liability to take offense. He belongs to the thin-skinned variety, and is easily wounded. He is always being slighted. At one time he was sick for a whole week and nobody visited him. He kept complaining of this flagrant instance of neglect, until some one asked him if he had always been careful to visit his sick neighbors. As visiting the sick has never been one of his strong points, he turned the conversation in another direction. A good deal of the energy of the church is spent in smoothing down his ruffled feathers.

The Deacon is a little man, full of restless activity, keeping in constant motion like a boy's spinning-top. "A fuss-budget" is the name sometimes given to him. He is easily excited, and there are those who take a sly delight in stick-

ing pins into him, that they may see him spitting fire. He is like the man who apologized to his wife for his quick temper, saying: "You must admit, my dear, that if I am a trifle hasty, I am soon off." "Yes," she replied, "but you are soon on again." If he takes offense at his minister he sulks in his tent, not being able to make the fine distinction of the Scotch woman who had a grudge against her minister but still came regularly to church. When he expressed his wonder at it, she said: "My quarrel is with you, not with the Gospel."

The time when Deacon Simpson's influence is most banefully felt is when the church is without a pastor, and is going through the exciting work of trying the paces of a string of candidates. None of them pleases him: one is too emotional, another too doctrinal; one is too poetic, another too prosaic; one is lacking in polish, another too dudish; one is too old, another too young. And so on it goes with weary iteration. When the church has almost settled upon a man, the Deacon goes around among the people, saying: "Oh, he will never do; he is wanting in this, or in that." So there is a division among

them, and the whole thing has to be gone over again. It was at the close of an experience of this sort that some one said: "When Deacon Simpson gets to heaven he will be sure to find fault with the fit of his crown or with the size of his wings."

The trouble with the Deacon is that he is always seeking after the ideal. He wants an ideal pastor and an ideal church. He forgets that he is not ideal himself. It is enough to find a pastor or a church that is seeking after the ideal. Most pastors and churches are doing their best. They need encouragement rather than blame. But let them never be so unreasonable as to expect all men to be reasonable. Paul sought to be "delivered from unreasonable men," for, said he, "all men have not faith"—faith being, according to his mind, the highest reason.

There is ground for the opinion that the Deacon's habit of growling has its root in inward dissatisfaction. The man who is on bad terms with the world is generally on bad terms with himself. The Deacon has allowed himself to get soured by disappointment. The prizes of life have eluded his grasp, having often been won by

those whom he regarded as inferior competitors. He has not yet learned life's great lesson of contentment. He is out of sorts with the world because his soul has not yet found its center of rest. It would do him a world of good to know what those people with whom he finds so much fault think of him; but it would do him still more good if he would change the keynote of his life from, "In all things grumble," to "In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

VII

THE NO-TALENT MAN

NE evening at prayer-meeting the subject under discussion was the parable of the talents. The five-, the two-, and the one-talent men were all considered in turn, when Deacon Strong arose and said: "There is another class not mentioned in the parable, and that is the no-talent man. To that class I belong. I can not teach in Sunday-school; I can not help in the singing; I can not take part in the meeting. I do not possess a single talent."

A candid friend who was present at once made reply: "You are mistaken, Deacon; I know of one very important talent which you possess."

"What is it?" he eagerly asked. "I would like to know about it."

"It is the talent for making money. Pick you up and drop you down anywhere at four cross-roads, and you would begin to trade and get gain. That is your talent, and you ought to

consecrate it to God just as fully as the preacher or missionary consecrates his."

This was a center shot, for in money matters the Deacon was very close. To get money from him for benevolent objects was like stripping the bark from a hickory-tree. The only sure way of fetching him was to appeal to his vanity. If he was called up first, and if he was made to feel that he was expected to set the pace so as to make the undertaking a success, he would give handsomely; but if he was asked to come in at the tail of the procession, he would do nothing at all. Another way to work him was to play off his business rival against him. If a hint was dropped as to what his rival intended to do he would always "go one better." But these were unworthy motives, and after the prayer-meeting incident referred to it was no longer necessary to appeal to them. Upon that evening there was born within him a new sense of stewardship. He came to see that it was his bounden duty to render unto the Lord according to what he had. He had discovered his talent.

One of the first places where this change of mind and heart became visible was in the home.

The Deacon had been slaving for his children, scraping money together to leave it to them after he was through with it; but small thankfulness did they feel for what the dead hand was to minister. Now he began to make investments in their present happiness. He made the home more attractive; he gave substantial help to the children who had married, and who were in the thick of the battle; he gave to his younger children educational advantages for which they longed, but of which they had almost ceased to dream. When spoken to about the radical change in the scheme of his life, his reply was: "I have discovered my talent, and I am trying to use it to the best advantage."

In his benevolence the Deacon adopted the tithing system. He gave a tenth of his increase unto Lord; the rest he kept for himself. Some things he counted as offerings which to others would have been looked upon in the light of personal expenses. But perhaps this was as far as he could have been expected to go, and it nailed him down to a definite course. He had to keep up a constant fight to adhere to this rule. His old selfish nature was made to squirm every time

that it lifted its protest against a generous deed. By and by it became easier to give. When impulse died habit lived.

The Deacon was sometimes urged by his friends to give up business. They would say: "You have made enough money to enable you to retire and enjoy yourself; you ought to slip your head from under the yoke, and give your place to another." Against this he had always two reasons to urge. "In the first place," he would say, "while I have something to retire *on*, I have nothing to retire *to*. Business has been my one absorbing interest in life; I get lots of solid pleasure out of it. Were I to give it up entirely, I would be like a tree plucked up by the roots; and, besides, to give up business would be to kill the cow that gives the milk. I want to continue in business so that I will have more to give to the Lord: as I am prospered His cause will be benefited. If money-making is my talent, I mean to work it for all it is worth."

It was the same thing about the making of his will. When the light came he was led to see that the will which he had already executed was altogether unsatisfactory. He put the matter

thus: "Think of the shame and confusion which would overwhelm me if, on going to meet my Lord and Master, to render up to Him the account of my stewardship, I had left Him out of my will." So he at once made a new will, supplying the omission.

It can hardly be said that Deacon Strong's view of stewardship is the highest one. But it has helped him. It has brought him a few steps into the right way, and it has brought into his life a new joy. But the Deacon is growing. He is beginning to get the first glimmerings of the larger truth that no distinction ought to be made between things that are secular and things that are sacred, or between things that belong to ourselves and things that belong to the Lord; he is beginning to see that all things are sacred, and that everything that we have belongs to the Lord. When he entered upon his new experience one of the brethren wittily remarked: "The Deacon has taken the Lord into partnership with him, but he has made Him the junior partner of the firm." This was at the beginning, and it marked a decided advancement. Formerly he had said: "All that I have is mine, and I

will give out of it to the Lord just what I please." Afterward he came to say: "Part of what I possess belongs to myself and part belongs to the Lord; I will try to do fairly with the Lord, and give Him what is His due." There are indications that he is being gradually led on to the higher ground, where he will be able to say: "Nothing that I possess is really mine; all of it belongs to the Lord; I hold it as His trustee, to be used for Him as He may direct." The law of tithes is his schoolmaster, leading him to the free and joyous consecration of all to Christ.

VIII

A MANLY ELDER

THE old cynic, Diogenes, who ran through the streets of Athens with a lantern in his hand looking for a man, would have found the object of his quest if he had come across the like of Elder Ewing; for Elder Ewing was not one of those "bipeds without feathers" who, in the catalogs, do go for men, but a man who was in every way worthy of the name. "A sounder piece of manhood was never put together." In him the elements of moral goodness were so mixed that "Nature might stand up and say to all the world, 'This is a man.'"

Virility is the word that expresses the predominant quality in his character. There was in him an utter absence of weak sentimentalism. A poetic friend charged it against him that he lacked imagination. That is hardly true. He did not relish Tennyson because of the feminine note in his poetry, but he reveled in Browning

because of the prevailing masculine note. He was attracted by Browning's representation of life as a scene of continuous and intense activity. "A man's poet," he was wont to say, "should not only grapple with great thoughts, but should also incite to great deeds."

Elder Ewing was a man to lean upon, a man to tie to. To his pastor he was a tower of strength. In those times of storm and stress which come to the best-regulated church, it was his cool head, and clear eye, and steady hand that steered the ship through the breakers. When there was trouble in the choir, it was to him that every one instinctively looked to put things to rights. He had a wonderful way of letting the light of common sense into some act of foolery, and making people feel ashamed of themselves. Yet he never humiliated them. In rebuking their folly he saved their self-respect. He wounded only to heal. Hence, instead of making those whom he rebuked his enemies, he made them his friends.

An Irishman reading the epitaph upon a tombstone, "A lawyer and an honest man," asked how it happened that two men came to be buried

in one grave. Elder Ewing was both a lawyer and an honest man. Throughout a long professional career his good name was unsmirched by the faintest suspicion of dishonorable dealing. When he left us to fill a high government appointment, we all felt that our church had lost one of its great object-lessons. People believed in his integrity. He was the friend and counselor of the poor and the unfortunate.

Many Christians try to keep out of things: they shield themselves from painful experiences; they shun unpleasant tasks; they put upon other shoulders burdens which their own ought to carry; they rock in wind-sheltered bays when they ought to be out on the storm-swept ocean battling their way to some distant port. To this class Elder Ewing did not belong. He never shirked. He never cushioned hard duties. A storm that would not have kept him from going to his business did not keep him from prayer-meeting. He was entirely free from "Sunday sickness." He could be counted upon to do his duty whatever was the sacrifice involved. He was as far removed as possible from the penitent who, when ordered to walk a certain number of

miles with peas in his shoes, took the precaution to boil the peas before setting out. But while doing hard and disagreeable things he never whimpered. He bore his cross with a song, not with a groan.

Honest and upright himself, "scorning to bend to mean devices for a sordid end," he was quick to detect the slightest sign of insincerity in others. In his presence the wrong-doer felt uneasy, and that not because of asperity of speech or harshness of judgment, but because of the consciousness that the Elder's clear, calm eyes were capable of looking beneath every guise. During the progress of a revival meeting a young man came into his office to talk with him about, or rather around, the matter of personal religion. His mind was troubled; he had been living a double life, but was not prepared to make a full confession. So he tentatively remarked: "I am a worse man than my friends know anything about." "You are greatly mistaken," was the quick reply; "some of us know exactly the rotten, deceitful life you have been living; and all I have to say is that the sooner you repent and turn over a new leaf the better." It needed just

that home-thrust to make the iron of conviction enter that prideful soul; it needed just that honest word to tear off the wrapping from his character and reveal it to him in all its naked deformity. That very evening the young man rose in meeting, made humble confession of his sin, asked the prayers of God's people, and cast himself upon the pardoning mercy of God. He afterward became an honored minister of the Gospel.

The Elder is an imperial but not an imperious man. There is about him a suggestion of hauteur, but it is all on the surface — a thing of manner and not of the spirit. It is a surprise to his friends how thoroughly he can unbend. In those hours of self-revelation which come in the sacred intimacies of personal friendship he discloses a nature trustful and tender. It richly pays to get through the hard shell of outward reserve to reach a kernel of affection so juicy and sweet.

After the Elder went to Washington we followed him in his public career with pardonable pride. He had grown up among us as man and boy; he was one of us, and we shone in the light

of his reflected glory. We felt sure of him. We knew that in public life he would be incorruptible; we knew that with him honesty would prove the spinal column of true manhood. He had not sought public office for its own sake, much less for what there was in it. Indeed, he had not sought it at all; it had been thrust upon him, and he had accepted it as a sacred trust, which he was to hold in the fear of God and exercise for the general welfare. Moreover, he was honest, not from outward compulsion, but from inward impulsion. He loved truth in the inward parts. He was not like the little boy who told his father that he had found a dollar. "Did you return it to the owner?" asked the father. "Yes," was the reply. "That was a good boy," said the father. "But the man had hold of me by the ear," admitted the boy. That was an example of honesty by compulsion, which is the only kind of honesty some public men know anything about.

One of the honors put upon village churches is that they produce such men as Elder Ewing. Our political institutions would perish in their own corruption were they not freshened and purified

by the stream of new life flowing into them from the country. And by far the most potent of the influences which mold those lives that bring salvation to the nation is that which comes from the little village church.

IX

A CRITICAL ELDER

"It was my custom in my youth," said a celebrated Persian writer, "to rise from my sleep, to watch, pray, and read the Koran. One night as I was thus engaged, my father, a man of practised virtue, awoke. 'Behold,' said I, 'thy other children are lost in irreligious slumber while I alone awake to praise God.' 'Son of my soul,' said he, 'it is better to sleep than to wake to remark the faults of thy brethren.'" Like this self-confessed accuser, Elder Black is said to lie awake o' nights thinking over the sins of his brethren. If anything goes wrong he is the first to see it; not that he hastens to put it right. Oh, no! That is none of his business. His Christian duty ends in exposing and denouncing whatever in his opinion is wrong. He acts as if he held a commission of prosecuting attorney for the High Court of Heaven. It is said that:

> " The best critics are they
> Who, with what they gainsay,
> Point out another and better way."

But Elder Black is not that sort of a critic.

The Elder is tall and slender, with deep-set eyes, beetling brow, bushy eyebrows, and a hooked nose of the Jewish type. Like Cassius, he hath a hungry look. His features, which are very irregular, are overspread by a calm and judicial serenity which gives them a sort of unity. He has the air of being a very knowing man—a man in whom is embodied the sum total of the world's wisdom. But it is impossible to escape the conviction that no mortal can ever be half as wise as the Elder looks.

Elder Black is evidently on good terms with himself. He delivers his opinions with a smack of satisfaction. But he is too critical to get much satisfaction out of the opinions of others; he sees a flaw in every argument, a dead fly in every pot of ointment. He has a way of taking the other side in every question that comes up. During a discussion he sits silent, and when every one else has spoken he shoots his bolt. His word is final in more senses than one. It is uttered as if it

were the measure of truth, and as if against it there could be no possible appeal. For obvious reasons he is generally allowed to have the last word; and, unfortunately, he is thereby confirmed in the conviction that he has closed the case.

In the Elder's creed the unpardonable sin is the denial of his infallibility. If his minister pays him becoming homage—if he defers to his judgment, if he seeks his council, especially if he submits to him his sermons for criticism—he becomes his stanch ally, and the way in which he will defend him, rebuking the people for their uncharitable judgments, has often won for him the good opinion of many. But let his minister call his wisdom in question—let him dare to be independent, especially let him have the termerity to run counter to his decision—and his doom is sealed; nevermore can he do right in his eyes. No sign may for a time be given of his changed feeling, but the wound inflicted upon his vanity will bleed inward, poisoning all the currents of his life. A strong friend, the Elder is also an implacable foe. He is feared more than he is loved. Those who acknowledge that they ought

to oppose him often keep at a distance from him because they fear the lash of his rebuke. No one is safe from his censure. A brother elder once facetiously remarked: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Elder Black."

The place of the wasp in the economy of nature it is difficult to explain. But he must have some end to serve or he would not be here. The place of such a man as Elder Black in the church is equally difficult of explanation. Perhaps he is given to the church as the thorn in the flesh was given to Paul—as a means of grace.

It is maintained by some that in the development of character evil plays a necessary part. If so, the evil-doer may serve some end that we do not understand, but no thanks to him for it. He has no good intention, and good intention alone makes conduct meritorious. That Elder Black has often sent his coreligionists to their knees; that he has often changed inertia into activity as effectively as is done by the sting of a wasp; that he has often bound into closer fellowship the faithful few to whom the spiritual interests of the church are paramount, goes without the saying. But no thanks to him for these results.

They lay altogether outside of his intentions. That good has come from them is due to the mercy of Him who causeth the wrath of men to praise Him, and who out of evil bringeth forth good.

Up to this point this sketch ought to have been written in the past tense, for Elder Black has been described as he was years ago. Upon a recent visit to my old parish I found that a wonderful change had taken place in him. An avalanche of trouble had fallen upon him. His health had failed, his wife had died, and through the misdoings of his only son, in whom his life was bound up, his fortune had been swept away. He had held to the theory that parents are responsible for their children's actions, inasmuch as if they were rightly trained in childhood they would not afterward go astray. He failed to take into account the cross currents of influence which lie outside the home. When the crash of all his hopes and theories came he was humbled and softened. The bitter fountains within him became sweet. Some of his Christian friends spoke of the change which had taken place as a second conversion. And that it undoubtedly

was, for all old things have passed away, and all things have become new. His old cynical, censorious spirit has been exorcised; the severe lines in his face have softened; his eyes wear a gentler, meeker look; his judgments of others have become more generous; he has come to know that there are a great many things which he does not know; he is ever ready to defer to the opinions of others—in a word, he has become one of those childlike souls to whom belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.

X

AN ELDER OF GOOD REPORT

F the initial impulse that brought Elder Brown into the church was religious—as it probably was—it has certainly long since spent its force. But finding himself in the church, he is not the kind of man to seek to get out of it. He has accepted the situation, and is making the best of it. He feels bound to see things through. He takes an active interest in missionary work, not because he is imbued with the missionary spirit, but because it is part of the church work, and he wants to see it succeed. His nature is not religious, yet he attends prayer-meeting, often giving up important social engagements to encourage the faithful few who are endeavoring to keep alive the altar-fire of true devotion.

While not altogether devoid of sentiment, he is utterly devoid of sentimentality. He keeps his emotions shut down under the hatches, concealing them from view, as if they were things

to be ashamed of. John's Gospel is to him a sealed book, there being in his nature nothing of the mystical. Religion is with him duty untouched by any visible emotion. He does right because it is right. Of personal attachment to Christ he has never given any evidence, but that may be because it is a secret too sacred to be spoken of to others—altho the more probable reason is that religion does not appeal to him in that way. Where others speak of following Christ, he speaks of following duty ; yet they all may mean the same thing.

Elder Brown is not a great man : he is not burdened by great ambitions ; he has no new-fangled schemes for saving the world; but he is always in his place. If somewhat unpoetic and commonplace, he is useful ; if something of a slave to his habits, his habits are good, and are concerned with the faithful discharge of duty ; if very much of a routine man, he keeps moving in the circle of practical ministry. In the intellectual region of things he is much more liberal than in questions of method. Use and wont have to him all the power of an inflexible law. That a thing has been done in a certain way

is a sufficient reason why it should always be done in that way. He resists innovation and change, and finds great difficulty in making new adjustments. But he is not troublesome nor obstructive; all that he asks is the privilege of working in his own way; and his way is a good one—for himself, at least, if not for others.

It is due to Elder Brown to say that he makes a model treasurer. Now, there is nothing more important for the success of a church than the management of its finances. It matters not how successfully a preacher may keep up the spiritual end of things, if the financial end is allowed to go by default trouble is sure to come. Poor financiering has ruined more churches than all other causes combined. Many a preacher is voted a failure, and resigns with a damaged reputation, when the only reason for his retirement is the wretched, unbusinesslike way in which the financial affairs of the church have been managed. The success of Elder Brown as a treasurer lies in the fact that he puts into the running of the finances of the church the same interest and painstaking care that he puts into his own business affairs. Not only does

he keep the books in perfect order, but he brings system into his work, gleaning the field thoroughly and attending to the minutest details. What a load of care he lifts from his preacher's heart! Every church has its ups and downs, and there come times when there is difficulty in making the strap meet the buckle. It is at such times that the Elder's power of bringing things to pass comes into play. When the cow has apparently been milked dry he insists that it can be made to give a little more, and declares that the strippings are the best of the milk. The Elder himself is somewhat close. He will give no more than his share, but he will give that. He is utterly opposed to the impulsive action of a brother elder who would give out of his own pocket all that is needed to make up a deficiency, at the expense of drying up his benevolence for some time thereafter. He maintains that such a thing destroys the morale of a church. He believes in developing a corporate conscience, and this he has succeeded in doing. If his methods are somewhat mechanical and iron-clad, they at least work well. His work belongs to that domain of things which the writer of the book of

Nehemiah calls "the outward business of the house of God," but it is well to remember that this outward business which has to do with the temporalities is part of the business of God's house. The vicious distinction between the secular and the sacred vanishes in the light of the higher truth that those who give themselves to the ministry of the Word and those who serve tables are equally engaged in the service of the Lord.

Into Elder Brown's hands have passed, by the fitness of things, many reins of power. His original stock of capacity was small, but in meeting responsibility development has come; and while he can do nothing brilliantly, he can do many things well. He is one of the first men selected to represent the church in meetings of Presbytery and Synod. We know that he will not shine, but we know that he will be judicious. He is often appointed to serve on important committees, and whatever is laid upon him is carefully attended to. We sometimes wish that his religion was more a thing of the spirit without being less a thing of habit; but he acts out himself, and naturalness is, after all, the most important quality in any man's

religion. Why complain that he is a man of ruts, seeing that the ruts keep him steady and straight? When he is called up higher—and far distant be the day—the only fitting epitaph for his tombstone will be: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

XI

A MODERN DIOTREPHES

DIOTREPHES was the church officer to whom St. John referred in his Third Epistle as one that loved to have the preeminence. It seems that John had sent a communication to the church of which the beloved Gaius, to whom he wrote this epistle, was a member, commending to their care certain itinerant preachers who were coming that way; but Diotrephes, who was a leading member of the same church, would not receive them, nor would he allow others to do so. Acting in a high-handed way, he even threatened with excommunication any one who dared to disregard his mandate. Clearly, Diotrephes was something of a pope in a small way. He was an ambitious, domineering man, who lorded it over God's heritage—a man who would either rule or ruin. In all likelihood his vanity was wounded because John had addressed his letter to the church instead of addressing it to him personally, for in his own estimation he was the church. So in-

ordinate was his love of power that he was not above trickery and intrigue when these were necessary to compass his end. He would play second fiddle to no man. He did not even scruple to set apostolic authority at naught. The apostle speaks of him as "prating against us with malicious words."

"The figure of Diotrephes," says Dr. Farrar, "is recognizable in the Church in all ages." It reappeared in a western church in the person of Deacon Anderson. The Deacon was a successful manufacturer in a small provincial town. He had the Midas finger, whose touch turns everything to gold. Things came to him. He had been able to have his own way in almost everything. He was in the habit of showing favors to church members whom he wished to get under his power. To hold his place of preeminence, he did not hesitate to resort to the methods of the ward boss. By working the wires it came about that the church, of which he was a shining light, became, like a pocket borough in England, a piece of personal property —a mere appendage to his mill.

In outward appearance the Deacon was a swol-

len, pompous, bejeweled, overdressed man, with well-developed *embonpoint*. He walked with a strut, with head thrown back and nose tilted heavenward. He looked like a man who was not sure of his position, and who, therefore, could not afford to compromise his dignity. His manner awakened the suspicion that under the lion's skin, which he wrapped so tightly about him, was concealed an unmitigated calf. There was one person who was not deceived by appearances, and that was his small, sharp-featured wife. Silent and deferential before him in public, the moment he crossed the threshold of the home she stripped off the lion's skin, and the big bully whom everybody feared shrunk into a corner, wearing in his manner a mute apology for his very existence.

Released from domestic surveillance, and with his feet once more upon what he regarded as his native heath, Richard was himself again. And usually somebody had to suffer for any indignity to which he might have been subjected at home. It was unfortunate for the church when his presence at the church meeting had been preceded by a lively experience of hen-pecking. But, hap-

pily for the peace of the church, his ebullitions of temper were generally taken with sullen silence. When he had his way things went swimmingly, for he was a regular driver and possessed executive power of no mean order. Any scheme which he did not originate was sure to be blocked. Hence, his brother deacons, in order to carry out any new enterprise, went to him beforehand, and, after making him believe that the thing had originated in his fertile brain, got him to make a motion that the thing should be done. For any scheme that had his indorsement he would not only work hard, but would give money with a lavish hand. When upon a certain occasion some one expressed surprise at his abounding activity and generosity the answer was made: "Don't you know that there are people who will do more and give more to have their own way than they will do or give that the Lord may have His way?"

Deacon Anderson was in the habit of using the words "my pastor," and there was a peculiar appropriateness in the phrase, inasmuch as he was generally understood to own the pastor. When a new pastor came upon the scene—and the succession of them was a somewhat rapid one—the

Deacon took him to ride in his carriage and showed him every possible attention. When the carriage drives became less frequent it was taken as a sign that his interest in his pastor was beginning to wane. If they came to an abrupt end it was a sign that the Deacon had become offended at something that the pastor had, perhaps all unwittingly, said or done. All his friends were valued in the measure in which he could use them; and when he found that he could not use his pastor for his own ends, he at once turned against him and began to work for his undoing. One of his ministerial victims called him a "regular bulldozer" — whatever that may mean. Within the domains of his factory and his church he would brook no rival. His will was law.

But in course of time the Deacon met his Waterloo. He had just succeeded in ousting a worthy pastor and in getting a man after his own heart. It was not long before this beloved pastor did something that greatly displeased him. The Deacon showed his teeth. But he had mistaken his man. That meek-looking pastor was a cyclone in disguise; no mild and patient-looking mule

ever concealed more effectually his true inwardness. An interview took place between pastor and deacon, with this amusing result: the Deacon was treated to a section of the day of judgment, his undermining tactics were exposed, and he was plainly told that, just as there could not be two popes in Rome, there could not be two heads in the church of Andersonville. Knowing that under his leadership the worm had turned, and that the church would stand by him, the minister said: "It is evident that for the good of this church either you or I have got to go, and I herewith serve you notice that I am not the outgoing party." The Deacon fell together in a heap. His prestige had suffered an irreparable collapse. He stood not upon the order of his going; he went at once. His carriage rolled up no more before the door of that humble meeting-house, but took its lordly way toward a fashionable church in a neighboring town. The erstwhile Deacon is rapidly developing into a high churchman of the first water. He has come to his own and his own have received him. Thus far he is meekness and humility personified. It is rumored that his itch for

power is not completely cured, and that he is already casting a covetous eye upon the office of church warden. Will he be permitted to occupy this new seat of power? Not if the people know him.

XII

A WATCHMAN ON ZION'S WALLS

LDER SKINNER may be described as a theological watchdog stationed at the door of Westminster Church. But if that figure be objected to as undignified, and if a Scripture figure be preferred, let us say that he is a watchman on the walls of Zion. If he does not keep the people alive to their danger from the invading hosts of error, it is not because the trumpet of warning blows an uncertain sound. The mistake he makes is in blowing it too often and too long, since thereby it loses much of its effect.

Courage of conviction is one of the Elder's chief characteristics. He is firm to obstinacy. He is one of those who can

> "Dare to be a Daniel,
> Dare to stand alone."

He reminds one of the representative of a small and rapidly declining sect in Scotland with whom Dr. Norman McLeod held the following collo-

quy: "How is your little kirk getting on, Donald?" "Not vera weel, Doctor." "How many of you are left?" "There's juist me and my brither Sandy," and then after a pause, "but I'm no sae sure aboot Sandy." Like Donald, Elder Skinner is sure of himself, but suspicious of almost everybody else.

He is a stout opponent of creed revision. The Confession of Faith, which is the regimental flag of his church, he regards with as much reverential awe as if it had been handed down from heaven. If truth is eternal he does not see why its outward form should change. A creed that was good enough for the fathers a quarter of a century ago is surely good enough for their children to-day. But there are some that persist in believing that a creed which smells of the fire of ancient controversies; a creed from which the love of God is absent; a creed which is based upon Divine sovereignty rather than upon Divine fatherhood, has become outgrown and obsolete. What Elder Skinner looks upon as the life buoy of the Church, keeping her afloat, others look upon as a millstone about her neck, dragging her into the depths of the sea.

As a historic landmark this ancient creed is of great value; as an expression of the living faith of the present it is utterly worthless. The ax is now lying against the root of the tree, while lusty woodmen are preparing to lift it up and ply it with vigor, and no protesting cry of "Woodman, spare that tree, touch not a single bough," will long avail to avert the fateful strokes which will bring it crashing to the ground. If men like Elder Skinner only knew it, they are doing all in their power to change a quiet and orderly reform into a violent revolution. The attempt to keep the new wine of Christian thought in the old wine skins can have but one result.

As a "sermon taster," Elder Skinner plumes himself upon having a very sensitive palate. He fancies that he can detect the presence of the slightest tincture of heresy, however carefully it may be concealed. The particular heresy of which he is in mortal dread at present is "higher criticism," but it is questionable whether the worthy Elder knows what higher criticism is. He holds it responsible for trying to rob him of his mother's Bible, and treats with scorn the promise which it holds out of giving him a better

Bible in its place—to wit, a Bible illuminated by the results of modern discovery and research. He has just succeeded in driving away from the church of which he is an elder a preacher whom he suspected of having liberal tendencies, and he has got installed in his place a man after his own heart: a foe to modern theology, and a valiant defender of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Speaking to a friend the other day, he said: "You ought to hear our new minister and see how he demolishes the higher critics."

"Are there many higher critics in your congregation?" inquired his friend.

"I have never thought of that; but when I come to think of it, I do not know of any."

"Are there any in the town or neighborhood?"

"I really have not heard of any."

"Well, what do you think of the wisdom of your preacher going out gunning after higher critics when it is not certain that there is one of them in the woods? He puts me in mind of my little boy hunting for bears in the garden."

The worthy Elder's talk about higher criticism

has a very disquieting effect upon young, thoughtful people. He does not seem to know that higher criticism is simply a method of study, and ought to be welcomed, whether all its results are accepted or not. We pay the Bible a poor compliment if our cheek blanches with fear when it is subjected to investigation. There is no need to dread the most searching scrutiny. "Truth is a torch; the more 'tis shook it shines." "God's Word," says an old writer, "is an anvil upon which many a hammer has been worn out." Untenable views of the Bible may pass away, *must* pass away, but the Bible itself, with its unique revelation of the mind and heart of God, will abide forever.

To those who come before the church session as applicants for fellowship the Elder is a holy terror. He puts them through a rigid examination upon the doctrines, so as to be sure that they are grounded upon the fundamentals of religion. "What are your views of the Atonement?" "What are the decrees of God?" "Can you explain the meaning of predestination?" are samples of the questions put to the trembling neophytes. How the Elder would have puzzled

and confused the daft catechumen, of whom it is said :

> " He wore the cowl, he kissed the cross,
> He handled book and beads ;
> The friars plied his stupid head
> With litanies and creeds.
>
> 'Twas vain—tho lines on lines they taught,
> He could learn only three :
> I love the Lord, I trust the Lord,
> I hope the Lord to see."

Instead of keeping the lambs outside the fold until they can jump the bars, would it not be better to take down the bars that they may come in as speedily as possible?

The good Elder thinks he is zealous for the faith, when he is simply zealous for his own opinion. He is spoken of sometimes as a fossil ; but it is only on the intellectual side that he is fossilized ; on the spiritual side he is very much alive. If he sometimes nibbles at the rind of truth without reaching the rich juice which lies beneath, at other times he draws spiritual refreshment from sources where one would least expect him to find it. He is a man of stern integrity, and

what he lacks in sweetness he makes up for in strength. He is a pillar of the church; but it would be better for himself and for others if he did not think that the church rested upon his solitary shoulders. A person can carry too much responsibility as well as too little.

XIII

A MINISTER'S STANDBY

EACON MURRAY was spoken of as the minister's friend. The church in which he exercised his office had had a succession of ministers, and he was the friend of them all. Some of them were not to his liking, but he felt bound to support them in their arduous work to the utmost of his power, for to him the pastoral relation was a sacred thing. His pastor was to him not a hired man, but a man called of God and chosen of the people to the highest work on earth. One minister, after he left, discovered that Deacon Murray had never really admired him as a preacher, and he concluded that he must have been hypocritical in his professions of friendship. In this he was mistaken. The Deacon stood by him through thick and thin because he was his pastor, and because he believed him to be a good, sincere man. He reasoned in this way: "No preacher can please everybody, and no man ought to be so unreasonable as to expect to be

satisfied in every respect with his pastor. Every man has limitations, and when a pastor does his best and his labors meet with reasonable success he ought to be sustained."

The fact is, the Deacon learned a lesson in early life which he never forgot. He had just been appointed to the diaconate, when trouble broke out with regard to the pastor, who had organized and built up the church, and had served it for many years. Some new people who had come into the church began to complain, and to say that they needed a younger man. The good Doctor was not what he once was. He had lost his snap, and had become somewhat old-fogyish in his ideas and methods. They admitted that he had ripeness of wisdom and experience, and an intimate knowledge of his flock; but the things which would have been put to the credit of a doctor of medicine or a lawyer were in his case put on the debit side of the ledger. The truth is, the Doctor was in the maturity of his power. He was a man of varied attainments, and, altho not an orator, he was a rare teacher. He had the gift of edification, and under his sagacious leadership there had grown up a genera-

tion of well-trained, consecrated Christians. It must be admitted that his head had grown gray, and his step a trifle slower, but his eye had not become dim, nor was his natural strength abated. But the records showed that he was over sixty, and that, in the opinion of some, was reason enough to call for his retirement. Carried away by the dissatisfaction of the hour, Deacon Murray gave his vote for a change of pastors. It was a sad day—a day of revelation—when the ties that had united pastor and people were sundered. The aged pastor moved to a neighboring town, where he engaged for a time in some form of mission work. But his spirit was broken; he could not forget that the church to which he had given his life had cast him off. It was not long before he passed to that land where churches cease from troubling and pastors are at rest. Before he went Deacon Murray had come to see that a cruel blunder had been made, and over his grave he shed tears of the bitterest regret.

The first incumbent that followed this aged pastor was spoken of as a regular driver. With a confidence as great as that of twenty popes he took hold of the work. Like a transatlantic

steamer plowing its onward way through all sorts of weather, he pushed forward through everything that stood in his path. Everybody had to give way to him. He lorded it over God's heritage. He was something of an orator of the florid type. A Scotch parishioner said of his preaching: "It's maist a' tinsel wark." He mistook perspiration for inspiration. But he was neither a teacher nor pastor. His sermons were plagiarized, and he devoted more of his attention to the lecture-platform than to the pulpit. The people soon got tired of him, and the church ran down under his ministry. There was a general feeling of relief when he received and accepted a providential call to a wider field of usefulness. The eyes of the people were opened, and they would have given anything to have been able to undo the past and to have their old pastor back; but he was beyond the reach of their call.

The Deacon was opposed to frequent changes in the pastorate. He had come to see that it takes a minister a long time to know his parish and to make new adjustments, and that every change involves a measure of loss. He saw, too, that, as a rule, the strongest churches were those that

had the longest pastorates. Hence he was considerate and patient, and willing to wait a long time for results. He knew that it took longer to grow oaks than gourds. Nor did he expect to find an ideal pastor; if he found a pastor who was striving to reach an ideal he was satisfied. And what is still rarer, he had the good sense not to expect to find a pastor who agreed with him in everything. He knew that when people said that a preacher was sound they generally meant that he agreed with their opinions. He had come to learn what some good Christians never seem to learn, that there is a difference between opinion and faith—one faith, but opinions as large in number as there are individuals. A good many people resemble the old farmer to whom Emerson loaned a copy of Plato's "Republic." When asked how he liked it, he replied: "First rate; I see that Plato had some of my ideas." It takes a broad man to appreciate things that lie outside his own domain.

What the Deacon liked personally was "a prophet of the soul"—a man who came from God with a fresh message; but prophets are rare in any age, and when he could not get a prophet

he tried to content himself with a priest. He divided preachers into two classes—"those who have something to say, and those who have to say something." He preferred the former, but he bore with the latter. The one thing which he regarded as indispensable in a preacher was honesty; not commercial honesty alone, but intellectual honesty. He said there can be nothing gained in the long run by holding back or covering up part of the truth. A preacher should be careful in his utterances, but he should be candid. He should take his people into his confidence with regard to the changes that are going on in Christian thought. But while expressing his convictions, his doubts he should keep to himself. His object should be to confirm faith, not to unsettle it. He should never uproot an error unless prepared to supplant it with a truth.

Deacon Murray's wife once unconsciously threw a flood of light upon his leading characteristic by remarking: "I stand by my minister when he is popular and is carrying the people with him, but my husband, if convinced that the minister is right, will stand by him when he is unpopular; I can work when things are pros-

pering; he works hardest when things are at the lowest ebb." He knew that churches have their ups and downs; he knew there were often untoward conditions for which the pastor had no responsibility and over which he had no control; and hence he stood by him not in the bright day only, but also in the dark and evil day. He was his friend and helper when friendship and help counted for something. More than one pastor has had reason to bless his name and to revere his memory.

XIV

A STRICT DEACON

THERE is a story of an old Jewish rabbi, a Jewish Rip Van Winkle, who drew a circle and stood within it, and said: "I shall not leave this circle until it begins to rain." And God loved him so well that on his determination not to leave the circle He thought it was wiser to send the rain down, for He knew that otherwise the rabbi would stand there until doomsday. Hence they gave him the name of "the circle man." Obadiah Jennings, like that old rabbi, was a very "sot" man. When he put down his foot he put it down to stay. The only way to get him to change front was to coax him to go in the opposite direction from that in which you wanted him to go. This bit of stratagem his patient wife often resorted to. But sometimes it would not work. He simply would not budge an inch until he was ready to move of his own accord. Hence, as a rule, the best way to deal

with him was to leave him alone until he came round.

The humorous feature in the situation was that when the Deacon had an altercation with any one he always charged the other party with being stubborn and unyielding. He took the position of the juryman who, after pitting himself in argument against his fellow jurors, said that he had never met with eleven such obstinate men. He had a family likeness to the Irish soldier who maintained that he was the only man in the regiment who was in step. That he could be in the wrong never occurred to him.

Deacon Jennings had jaws like a mastiff, and when he brought them down upon any one they held like a vise. He was a strong advocate of church discipline. The church of which he was a member was not allowed to fall into laxity. Once when he preferred charges against a brother that he walked disorderly, during the course of trial the accused turned upon him and said: "I can undertake to satisfy my conscience, but I can not undertake to satisfy Obadiah Jennings." Such an experience as this has led many a man to exclaim with David: "Let me fall into the

hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man."

When the Deacon's wife died—worn out before the time by her vain endeavor to meet his severe exactions—he resented all overtures to renew his matrimonial experiences, on the Scriptural ground that a deacon is to be "the husband of one wife." It did not occur to him that these words of Paul might mean that a deacon ought to be a married man, or that he might have only one wife at a time. To him their only possible meaning was that a deacon ought to have one wife and no more. So that if his wife was taken away, having got his matrimonial allowance, he must on no account remarry. He had no such lofty sentiments as that true marriages, being made in heaven, are not for time only, but are for eternity also; indeed, he had no sentiment about the matter at all. The restriction was clearly laid down, and as a good deacon he meant to abide by it. And he did.

It goes without the saying that the Deacon was not a comfortable man to get on with. He was conscience incarnate. Accurate in speech himself, he kept others to a strict account for

every word they uttered. Words to him were sacred things, and were to be carefully selected. He had adopted a nephew, whom he tried to bring up in the fear of the Lord. Now, it happened that this nephew was a child with a finely strung nature, and a vivid imagination. Living a repressed life, he retreated into his own world of fancy, where he had converse with the people he had created. He was generally reticent about this side of things, but, caught unawares, he would sometimes tell wonderful stories of what he had heard and seen. The Deacon was shocked, and instead of seeing in him an embryonic poet, he saw in him an unmitigated liar. The severest measures were resorted to in order to crush out these seeds of natural depravity, with the result that individuality itself was crushed out, and a life that might have developed into a thing of strength and beauty became stunted, limp, and colorless.

The Deacon's virtues were negative rather than positive. He lived in the second table of the law. He gave more attention to the "Thou shalt nots" than to the "Thou shalts." He was an anti-man—an anti-Mason, an anti-saloon

man, an anti-tobacco man, and so on. He was against everything that he considered to be wrong, but he expended so much of himself in protest that little was left for the positive and constructive virtues. His efforts at doing good consisted mainly of faultfinding. Of salvation by displacement he did not appear to have the first conception. He generally exasperated when he ought to have conciliated; repelled when he ought to have won. He did not belong to those upon whom rests the encomium, "He that winneth souls" (literally, taketh them by blandishment) "is wise." He was zealous, but not wise.

Being rigorous in his judgment of others, it was very natural that people should be delighted when he tripped. He was a strict Sabbatarian, and anything in the nature of Sunday labor was eschewed. But on one occasion, in a fit of absent-mindedness, he got mixed regarding the days of the week, and took his hoe and began working in his garden on a Sunday morning. After a time he began to see the people pass by dressed in their best clothes. He wondered where they were going. If he could have seen the look upon their faces he would have known what it all

meant. As he was pondering over the problem the church bells rang out in the calm morning air. He threw down his hoe and rushed into the house, overwhelmed with confusion. His place in church was vacant that morning. Inquiries about his garden were common for some time afterward, as was also advice with regard to the desirability of confining his labors to six days in the week. It was noticed that he had nothing to say about the sin of Sabbath-breaking for a long time afterward.

It ought to be said that if Deacon Jennings was severe upon others he was no less severe upon himself. He lashed himself for every delinquency with the whip of scorpions. The key-note of his life was:

> "Arm me with jealous care,
> As in Thy sight to live;
> And oh, Thy servant, Lord, prepare
> A strict account to give."

That would have been all right had he not also sought to be armed with jealous care to see that others did what he thought was right. He seemed to think that he had received a special commis-

sion to act as detective for the Almighty. God would have liked him better if he had let some things alone. A sinful man should be charitable toward sinners. It is better to be accused of being soft hearted than to be praised for being hard headed. "Scarcely for a righteous man"—a man who has more law than Gospel, a man who toes the line and makes others toe it, a man who is cold and crystalline, exact and exacting—scarcely for such a man will one die; "yet peradventure for a good man"—a man who has more Gospel than law, a man who is charitable, tolerant, and merciful—"some would even dare to die." The man who is loved is the man who remembers that he is human and that those with whom he has to deal are human.

XV

A HOPEFUL DEACON

WHAT is more beautiful than a simple-hearted man who, in a wide and varied experience with others, has kept fresh and sweet his faith in man? He has been deceived, but he does not think that all men are imposters; he has been traduced, but he does not think that every tongue has upon it the venom of slander; he has been cheated, but he does not think every man a sharper. Such a man was Deacon Goodspeed. He had in an eminent degree the faculty of seeing the good side of things. He was hopeful of others. If he erred at all it was on the side of overhopefulness rather than on the side of distrust. He was always finding out good points in others and dwelling upon them. When things went wrong he anticipated a change for the better. He hoped against hope. He was like the Scotch gamekeeper of the Earl of Aberdeen, who had a habit of saying

on every possible occasion, "It micht have been waur," which in English means "It might have been worse." One of the guests took a wager with the earl that he would make a remark to which Donald would not give that reply. So one day, in the presence of his friends, he said:

"Donald, I'd an awful dream last night; I dreamt that I was dead. And that's not the worst of it; I dreamt that I was in hell."

"Aweel, it micht hae been waur," was the unexpected answer.

"How could it possibly be worse?" said the other.

"Ye micht hae been there," said Donald. The wager was paid.

It was not that the Deacon was afflicted with a blind optimism that ignored unpleasant facts. He looked the hard facts of life straight in the face; he looked at them without blanching, and cheerily asked: "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Yet well he knew that many of life's greatest trials are imaginary, and that people are often frightened at shadows. He could indorse the words of the old man who said on his death-bed: "My sons, I have had much

trouble in this world, but the worst of it never happened."

We all take the reflection of things largely from ourselves. If the reflecting surface is uneven it distorts the outline. To the jaundiced eye everything is yellow. The beautiful grove in which the poet sees visions of paradise is to the hog a place in which to root for acorns. So, in a sense, it might be said that Deacon Goodspeed created the world in which he lived. His world was full of beautiful things. No man was ever surrounded with such a circle of good people, no man ever had his life crammed so full of good things, and no man ever had a more sunny and hopeful outlook. Those who did not know better looked upon the Deacon's uniform cheerfulness as a matter of temperament. They said: "He is made that way." They were wrong. It was an achievement rather than an endowment, and an achievement which had been won by hard struggle. By nature he was querulous and desponding, but he had reasoned himself, and prayed himself, and worked himself into a better disposition. Once, when a crushing sorrow came upon him, he was heard to say:

"We can not choose our trials. Had it been left to me, I would have selected any one rather than this. If I must bear it, I can at least bear it without whimpering." And he did. Had there been a Sunshine Club in the church of which he was a member, he would have been unanimously elected its president. People knew that he had been tried by fire and had not been found wanting. He was not like the old lady who, when her horse ran away, trusted in Providence until the breeching broke, and then she gave it up. It was when the breeching broke that his serene hopefulness came into play. He was sure that he would be delivered out of the present trouble as he had been delivered out of past troubles.

Of the servant of Jehovah, Israel's ideal man, it was said: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." This was true of Deacon Goodspeed. Whatever were the difficulties before him, he held on and held out until the work was accomplished. A man may keep on with his work when the hope that inspired it has faded out; he may keep on from force of habit, because he does not know how to stop. In such a case the work

done will be mechanical. It is the hopeful worker who does the best work. God has never done any great work through discouraged people. Before using them for the accomplishment of any important undertaking He has to put into them the inspiration of hope. A discouraged man is a man at his worst; a hopeful man is a man at his best.

But even more important than the possession of a spirit of hopefulness is the disposition and ability to impart hopefulness to others. The world is full of discouraged people. Lives are being wrecked for lack of encouragement. Deacon Goodspeed felt it his duty to be an encourager of the brethren. He helped others to bear their heavy loads; he brought a healing influence into the sick-room; he never told people how ill they looked; believing it to be an unchristian work to discourage and depress, he always held out the bright side of things. Like the prophets of old who, while they saw the evil of the present, told of the better day, or, like the Master Himself, who was never known to speak a discouraging word to any one, he made it his aim to bring heart and hope to men. In times

of commercial depression, when people were out of work and were feeling the pinch of poverty, he was a true son of consolation. He reminded them that business has its flow as well as its ebb, and that soon the tide would turn. He encouraged those who were in danger of being submerged to breast the waves and keep afloat until the better days should come again. When things went wrong in the church, as they sometimes will do, his voice was heard counseling patience, fortitude, and courage. Difficulties were sent to test and to strengthen faith, and out of them all the Lord would lead his people into the land of promise. His pastor, when depressed, was often cheered by his words of encouragement and hope, and was led to take a fresh grip upon things, and to labor with redoubled vigor.

The sunny hopefulness of the Deacon with regard to the future had the effect not only of making him bear the ills of the present, but also of making him put himself unstintedly into the present. With the future secure in God's hands he could afford to be generous. Without throwing prudence to the winds he practised a large liberality. His income was not large, but his

heart was. And when by chance his pastor found out the sacrifice which the Deacon was making to support the church he was moved to tears, and he said: "I feel ashamed to eat sacrificial bread; I am not worthy of such fare."

The world hardly realizes what it owes to its hopeful men. They are the men who see visions, the prophets who tell of the better day, the heralds of the new dispensation. Practical men often look upon them as visionary. The new ideas and schemes of which they are full are regarded as Utopian, yet they are the forces that move this old world forward. Deacon Goodspeed had his full share of this sort of criticism. There were people who said that he was a rainbow-chaser; and these were greatly astonished when one day he found a crock of gold at the end of a rainbow. An invention upon which he had been at work for years was patented, and he became a rich man. Behind that success lay years of deferred hope which had failed to make the heart grow sick. When an experiment had not succeeded he would let it go like a red-hot poker and try something else. He had a way of forgetting past failures and coming up to the new

enterprise smilingly, with a heart brimful of hope. His increased wealth simply widened the area of his usefulness. He scattered blessings broadcast. He was careless about reaping the full advantage of his invention. Shrewd men shook the fruit from the tree which he had planted and passed to success over the bridge which he had built. And he was willing that it should be so.

Wealth sometimes sours the spirit, making its possessor, who feels its hollowness, paganly pessimistic. Hence suicide is more frequent among the rich than among the poor. Deacon Goodspeed retained his sweet hopefulness to the end. As it had shone brightly on the background of trial, it shone no less brightly upon the background of prosperity.

XVI

A TROUBLER IN ISRAEL

Deacon Smith is hardly the kind of a man that Ian Maclaren dubs "the mutineer," inasmuch as he is not frank and above-board enough to take part in open mutiny. He puts one in mind of the submarine boat used in modern warfare. This boat, which carries large electric torpedoes, is kept anchored under water, with nothing but a small observation-tube visible. It creeps up stealthily upon a large man-o'-war and blows it to atoms. A craft of this kind is hard to fight. The unwary are at its mercy. It does not even show itself after it has done its deadly work, but scuttles back to its place and puts on its wonted look of innocence. If the Deacon were to come to the surface he would be less dangerous; but not only does he strike without showing his hand, he keeps out of sight afterward, deceiving by his unimpassioned look the very elect.

In outward appearance he is not impressive. He is an undersized man, feline in step, and soft in voice; with small, shifty, furtive eyes, retreating chin and forehead, a long, aquiline nose, which stands out in the center of his face like the end of a triangle. His perceptive faculties are sharpened to a point, his nose having apparently been made for the purpose of poking into things.

When a new minister is settled over the church, the Deacon waits upon him at the first opportunity and tells him what he ought to do. If he can not steer the minister he becomes his enemy. He begins to plot against him. Seeds of disaffection are silently dropped in the minds of others; the weapons of innuendo and suspicion are freely used, but not a word of open, manly opposition is heard. To the minister himself his speech is vitriolic; he will do all that is in his power to exasperate him, and to goad him on to some public attack, when he will remain silent, assuming the rôle of injured innocence, thus winning sympathizers not a few. If the minister resigns the Deacon will follow him up like a sleuth-hound, conducting a still hunt, holding on to the scent, never once getting off the trail, and

never slackening his pace until he has struck his poisoned fangs into his victim. Should his quondam pastor appear as a candidate before a vacant church, with every prospect of being accepted, an anonymous letter will come to the church committee warning them that he is not a safe man, and his name will be mysteriously dropped.

The Deacon is a great stickler for orthodoxy. He wants his pastor to stick to the old paths, and preach the old Jerusalem Gospel. He does not seem to be of the opinion of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "we have come to the new Jerusalem," and that hence we ought to preach the new Jerusalem Gospel, which is the old Jerusalem Gospel with a new accent, and with applications suited to new conditions and needs. In its inner essence the Gospel is ever the same, but it is to be presented in new forms fitted to each succeeding age. But the Deacon's most common complaint is that his pastor does not preach Christ. He does not want to hear even the moral side of business or politics discussed from the pulpit. Some of his own business transactions as a real estate man are said to

have been somewhat shady. But he never oversteps the law. In his business dealings he is hard and exacting. The gospel of business is something which he has not yet discovered. Upon one occasion, when he characterized a certain sermon as "Christless," a fellow-deacon replied: "Man alive, what are you thinking about? There never was a sermon preached that had more of Christ in it. It was full of Christ from beginning to end. The spirit of Christ was in it as the egg is in the cake, but you are one of those that can not believe there is an egg unless you see it in the shell."

One of the Deacon's weaknesses is an itch for office. It is not his way to allow the office to seek the man; the man seeks the office. He lays pipes, pulls wires—does all the things that an unscrupulous politician might do to gain his end. And, not content with securing office for himself, he is constantly at work endeavoring to run in those who are to his liking, and to run out those who are not to his liking. Those who are to his liking are those he can use, those who are not to his liking are those he can not use. He is always hatching some new scheme by which he can

gather the reins of power into his hands. When it is necessary to spring a mine he prepares it with great secrecy, and when the explosion takes place it is another hand that lights the fuse, and he is quite likely to appear on the scene as a surprised spectator, deploring the catastrophe.

The wonderful thing is that seditious, factious men like Deacon Smith are not suppressed by an indignant church. But no one seems willing to bell the cat, and so their harmful work is allowed to go on. They, however, deceive none save themselves. They think that they are playing a deep game, and that nobody sees their hand, while almost every move they make is being discussed. When Deacon Smith does not like his pastor he can not help showing it. He is restive under his preaching. He looks bored; he snaps his watch. He seems to forget that he has come to church not to listen to man, but to worship God. In his mental composition reverence is left out. To use Dr. Holmes' figure, there is a hole in his head where the bump of reverence ought to be. If he had more of the fear of God before his eyes he would be less inclined to in-

dulge in captious criticism. Deacon Smith is frequently described as a kicker. It would be more correct to speak of him as a pricker. He covertly sticks pins into the quivering flesh of those against whom he happens to have a grudge. Perhaps the title that best of all describes him is that given to Achan, namely, "a troubler in Israel." A more infamous brand could hardly be put upon a man. And that it should be justly earned by any one professing to live a Christian life is as strange as it is sad. Every true Christian must deplore the fact that he can do so little good in the world, but how a Christian can deliberately set himself to undo the work of others passes comprehension. To men of the type of Deacon Smith it is nothing that the peace of the church should be broken and the work of the Lord hindered if only they can carry out their selfish ends. Not having moral weight and worth enough to make their influence felt in legitimate ways, they make it felt in mischief-making. Who would envy them this sort of power? One thing is certain: those who trouble Israel sooner or later bring trouble upon themselves. They are taken in their own net,

hoisted on their own petard. The pity of it is that before they reach their inglorious end a supine church often allows them to do incalculable harm. The sooner they are squelched the better.

XVII

A PEACEMAKER

DEACON LOVEJOY was a jewel. To his pastor he was a comfort unspeakable. He took it upon himself as his special task to drop oil upon the church machinery when it began to creak. He stood as a buffer between colliding members, softening the shock. People said that he got pounded on both sides for his pains. Yes, but he often prevented serious disaster.

The young lady who "manipulated the ivories" had her full share of the eccentricities of genius. When on Sunday mornings she sent word that she could not play, Deacon Lovejoy had to smooth her down and bring her round. One Christmas it was suggested that he ought to be presented with a pair of knee-pads to keep his trousers from wearing out through much kneeling.

A serious quarrel once arose between two of

the members of the church, a tailor and his customer, regarding a coat. The tailor maintained that it was an exact fit, but the customer would not accept it. Hot words were exchanged, and a bitter estrangement seemed about to take place, when Deacon Lovejoy went quietly to the tailor and bought the coat for himself. Since the man for whom it was made was considerably shorter and stouter than himself, the Deacon cut rather a queer figure in such a roomy and abbreviated garment. But his act was not without value as an object-lesson, especially to the two men who had allowed a breach to be made in their friendship. They were made to feel ashamed of their folly.

One of the occasions upon which Deacon Lovejoy's services as peacemaker were of immense value was when he prevented schism in the church. At the time of its formation the people of the community had agreed together to sink their minor differences and to remain undivided in fellowship. They saw nothing in the religion of Christ to keep them apart. They saw that to divide on theological, critical, or ritual questions was to divide on what is not the essence of

Christ's religion. Standing upon the simple, undogmatic religion of Christ, they adopted a platform which afforded the broadest possible basis of local union. Various attempts were made from time to time to drive in the wedge of sectarian division; but so strong was the sentiment in favor of union that all these efforts of zealous sectarians proved abortive. At length there came along an evangelist who tried to persuade a number of the people to separate themselves from the church as a protest against denominationalism. It was then that Deacon Lovejoy's good sense came into play. "So," he said, "you want to found a new denomination and call it the undenominational denomination! Are you foolish enough to think that one more division in the church will help on the cause of union?" The people saw the point.

The town in which Deacon Lovejoy lived was originally a New England settlement. After a time a German element began to come in, but they came so quietly that the people were amazed to find that they were strong enough to build a church of their own. Soon they made themselves felt in the social life of the place. They

opened a beer-garden, held Sunday picnics, and in many ways broke in upon the quiet of the Lord's day. A conflict between two civilizations seemed inevitable. Feeling against the foreigners ran high, and a race war was opening which would have led to estrangements which it would have taken many years to heal, when at the right moment Deacon Lovejoy poured oil upon the troubled waters of the social life. He reasoned with his English-speaking friends, and counseled them to exercise patience. Why should they expect that the people of another nation would, without a protest, accept their customs? He likened America to a stomach which receives representatives of different nationalities and converts them into Americans. He reasoned with his German friends and tried to show them that personal liberty had its limits; the liberty of a man to swing his arm ending where another man's nose begins. As a result the hatchet was buried. Without compromise of principle on either side an adjustment was made, and it was not long before some of the offensive practises of the Germans were given up and the community became a social unit.

But perhaps the crowning work of Deacon Lovejoy's life was in connection with a threatened strike, in which he acted as arbitrator. He was himself an employer of labor upon a small scale. In all his employees he took a personal interest. He did not look upon them as "hands," whose movements he was to control, but as "souls," whose movements he was to direct. When business was slack and prices low he kept his workmen on at a loss, and when there was a press of business they remembered this and worked with redoubled energy. He looked upon his men as having some claim upon the money which he had accumulated, inasmuch as they had helped him to make it. Business was to him a joint-stock affair, and the interests of capital and labor were mutual and not antagonistic. The principle upon which he proceeded to adjust the labor difficulty which had arisen, and which threatened to lead to a bitter and protracted strike, entailing no end of suffering, is that contained in the words, "Put yourself in his place." He tried to get both sides to look at matters from the opposite point of view. He asked the workingmen what they would do in

the circumstances if they were employers of labor, and he asked the employers what they would do if their positions were reversed. In this way he enabled them to come to an understanding, and not only were the present difficulties righted, but both parties were led to acknowledge that arbitration as an appeal to reason is a more excellent way of settling all difficulties than the strike, which is an appeal to force.

It must not be supposed that the Deacon was a peace-at-any-price man. He did not believe in peace won by the surrender of principle. Peace, he said, should come between man and man as it comes between man and God—through righteousness. Nor did he believe in peace by separation, but by reconciliation. He went through life acting the part of a daysman, who laid his hand upon the heads of those who were at variance, bringing them together, "making of twain one new man, and so making peace"; and in his experience were verified the words of the beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

XVIII

A HOBBY-RIDER

NE of the few instances in Scripture in which there seems to be a touch of humor is in Hosea vii : 8, where it is said: "Ephraim is a cake not turned." A cake not turned is a cake half burned and half raw, overdone and underdone—a rather unpalatable article of food. This figure describes Deacon Zimmerman, especially in the initial stages of his spiritual development. He was a one-sided Christian, changeful in his moods as the skies of his native Switzerland. He was a double-minded man, in the sense that he had two minds, but he had neither of them long at a time. He had a dual nature. He was two persons rolled into one. Without knowing the time of the year when he was born, the guess might be hazarded that if there is anything in the old astrology he probably saw the light of day under the sign of Gemini, the twins. You never knew what he

would do. One day he blew hot, the next day he blew cold; one day he was gushing with affection, the next day he was cold as an iceberg. The only thing you were certain about was his uncertainty.

In Deacon Zimmerman the bump of wonder was abnormally high. His round, blue, child-like eyes often wore a far-away look. Some one once inquired if he had been at church on a certain Sunday. A fellow-deacon from the Emerald Isle made reply: "I believe he was, but he does not know it himself, as he was in dreamland all the time." But the Deacon could be very much awake. He was kept from being a dreamy sentimentalist by the working of a sensitive conscience, which pulled him back to duty when he was in danger of being lost in the endless mazes of his own imaginings.

By those who did not know the real good that was in him he was looked upon as a mild and harmless enthusiast. He was sometimes voted "a regular crank," but if he was a crank he often turned things to some profit. His vagaries did not supplant his Christian faith; they were grafted on to it. It did not matter how often or

how ardently he chased after new things, he always kept his hold upon the Bible as the supreme rule in faith and practise, and always returned from his wanderings to the Church as his spiritual home.

All the fads of the day found in Deacon Zimmerman one of their first supporters, but he always maintained that he was simply an investigator. Those who counted upon his continued support were doomed to disappointment. Sooner or later there was something in the new theory that did not quite satisfy him, and he dropped it like a piece of hot iron.

At one time he was carried away with the idea that the Anglo-Saxon race is the lost ten tribes of Israel, and he read prophetic fulfilment in the light of this profound discovery. In the pyramids of Egypt he saw embodied in stone the sum of universal truth. He came to believe in the near approach of the Second Advent, figured out the exact date, sold his property, and prepared his ascension robes; but to the sale of his property there was a string attached, which was found useful when hope deferred made his faith flicker out. For a time he was taken up with esoteric

Buddhism, and rejoiced in the doctrine of Karma; but when he discovered that it robbed him of the idea of a living God with whom he could hold personal intercourse, and when he came to see what a poor substitute reincarnation is for personal resurrection, theosophy lost much of its fascination for him. He leaned kindly toward Christian Science; but, while admitting the practical benefits coming from the influence of the mind over the body, he could not accept it as a philosophy, much less as a religion. To deny the palpable facts of sin, disease, and death in order to get rid of them seemed to him as sensible as it is for the ostrich to stick its head in the sand in order to escape its pursuer.

It was the same in other matters. For a time he was a great believer in hydropathy, and then the water-cure was everything. Some one said that he believed in water "externally, internally, and eternally." Next he became an ardent homeopathist; he believed that the more attenuated a medicine was the greater its curative power. He was an advocate of dilutions so low as to amount to a drop of tincture in the waters of Lake Michigan. He was one of those whose

theory has been reduced to the *argumentum absurdum:*

Your homeopathic doses, sir,
Just suit me to a tittle;
They prove of physics, anyhow,
You can not take too little!

Admitting the premises, the conclusion logically follows:

If it be good in all complaints
To take a dose so small,
It surely must be better still
To take no dose at all!

He was at one time a stout anti-vaccinationist; he thought that the average human system had enough poison in it without adding to its supply, and maintained that the real cause of the decreased virulence of smallpox, cholera, and similar germ diseases was to be found in improved sanitation. For a time he was a strict vegetarian, and subsisted upon grains and fruits, until, in an hour of weakness, in the presence of a good, juicy beefsteak, he fell from grace, never to rise again.

The friends of Deacon Zimmerman were wont to smile at his vagaries; but there were those who

thought that he evinced a hospitality to new truths which was commendable. One thing which all admired in him was the eagerness with which he went after the next new thing. If like a puppy he scratched to the end of an empty hole, he made the next essay with undiminished zest and hope. And out of his searchings after truth he got no end of pleasure. Some one has said that men of a certain order, like Luther, when withdrawn from turmoil and strife, see devils; others of the type of Newman, in retirement see angels. Deacon Zimmerman saw angels. He dwelt in heavenly places.

When Deacon Zimmerman came into the church it seemed as if he was one of those mortals made

> "Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
> No permanent foundation could be made."

But such was by no means the case. When converted, an organizing center had been formed within him; and, altho for a time little change was manifest, yet after a while his ill-regulated, ill-adjusted life began gradually to be reduced to harmony. He never attained unbroken uniform-

ity of experience. His religious life was always more or less fitful; he passed by sudden leaps from one extreme to another; sunshine and gloom, fever and chills alternated in his experience, and new things never ceased to interest him. Yet the discordant elements in his life were more and more brought into unity; the ethical purpose by which he was swayed became strengthened; and while he never became distinguished for systematic living, he was distinguished for good living.

Now that he has passed within the veil, he has doubtless found new fields for the gratification of his insatiable curiosity—which it can not be questioned was closely allied to reverence.

XIX

A MODERN APOSTLE JOHN

EBENEZER JAYNES was a ruling elder, but he seldom received his official title. The name by which he was universally known was Uncle Eben. He was everybody's uncle, everybody's friend. He was not a man of great intellectual force, but he was a man of great heart force. He had a great power of loving. He had been born into the kingdom heart first, and heart qualities were those by which he was distinguished. He was love in action. In his Christian experience he was moved not so much by conscience as by compassion. He loved men into better living. His motto was not "Live and let live," but "Live and help live."

Uncle Eben came into the Kingdom somewhat late in life. He had been a hard drinker, and when in his cups his temper was anything but amiable. One evening, in a state of semi-intoxication, he stumbled into a church where evangel-

istic services were being held. Something in the message he heard arrested his attention.

"God is sorry for you," said the speaker. "He loathes your sin, but He loves you."

"If God is sorry for me," said Uncle Eben, "it is time I was sorry for myself; and if He loves me while hating my sin, there is hope for my redemption."

The thought of God's pitying love touched his heart and melted him to repentance. He became a changed man. All old things passed away, and all things became new. For a time he felt the stirrings of temptation, and more than once he was drawn to the door of the saloon, but he saw above the door the sign of the cross, and the spell of the tempter was instantly broken. He had often been recommended to try the gold cure for the drink habit. He said that in the "blood cure" he had discovered a better remedy, and never did he grow weary of declaring its efficacy.

Forgiven much, he loved much. No ointment was too precious for the Lord's anointing; no service for others was too onerous if thereby he could in some small measure repay the debt which he owed his Lord. His heart flowed out

especially toward the tempted and the fallen. He had for all of them a word of cheer and a hand of help. They instinctively grew close to him. He allowed them to lean hard upon him. He hoped all good things for them, and his hope often brought its own fulfilment.

Uncle Eben was a lover of children. When he passed along the street the children ran out to meet him. They dived into his pockets for candy, nuts, or apples, and seldom did their search go unrewarded. When any child in the village was sick Uncle Eben carried to him little delicacies, and when the child began to mend sat by his bedside telling stories, making shadow-pictures with his fingers upon the wall, or with skilful hands fashioning a kite or ship. As a story-teller he was simply inimitable. He made the Bible characters relive, modernizing them as the evangelist, Moody, was wont to do. Adam was the foolish gardener; Noah, the great ship-builder; Abraham, the trusting emigrant; Joseph, the great grain-dealer, and so on. Every story had a central point around which all the details were grouped, and the moral, while not obtruded, was always strongly suggested.

By trade Uncle Eben was a cooper, and among his possessions was an Indian pony by the name of Buckskin, which he used for taking his tubs and barrels to the factories for which he worked. But Buckskin served other functions. He was something of a public utility. Hitched to that expansive conveyance called a "democrat," he was on duty Sunday mornings taking the halt and the lame to church. On holidays he might be seen hauling a lot of happy children into the country to gather nuts or berries, or taking a selected group of boys down to the river for a day's fishing. He seemed to enter into the hilarity of the occasion quite as much as his owner. Those were red-letter days with the children, and the memory of them abode with them long after Buckskin and his master had passed out of the landscape.

One of the beautiful and helpful agencies which Uncle Eben established was a flower mission. The children of the village roamed the woods and fields and gathered wild flowers; they also made levies upon the gardens; and all their spoils they took to the cooper's shop, where they were carefully packed in boxes and sent to the

hospitals and settlements in the neighboring city. Sometimes Uncle Eben took the flowers into the city in person. On these occasions he was always accompanied by some of the children. By allowing them to distribute their gifts with their own hands he led them to see how much happiness a simple ministry could confer.

Another fruitful agency which he established was a Band of Mercy among the boys for the protection of dumb animals. Bird-nesting came to an end, slingshots were put away, and the feathered songsters began to multiply. The boys wore their badges pridefully, and were active in detecting and reporting every act of cruelty to animals. There was one aggravated case of a farmer who often left his horse tied to a hitching-post all day, and sometimes far into the night, without food or water, and unprotected from rain and snow. The boys remonstrated with him in vain. One day Uncle Eben quietly untied the poor horse, put him into a livery-stable, and had the bill sent to the owner. The farmer was furious, and instituted a lawsuit, the result of which was that he was heavily fined, besides being required to pay the livery bill. When

once Uncle Eben's anger was roused over some act of wrong or oppression, it was a wise thing to keep out of his way. He had that uncommon combination of "a tender heart and will inflexible." Those who assumed that he was a weak sentimentalist found out their mistake. His righteous indignation was as a furnace-blast which scorched every wrong-doer who stood before it.

The influence of Uncle Eben came even more from what he was than from what he did. His very presence radiated sunshine. His spirit was bathed in the love of Christ. He had that power of substitution which belongs to every loving heart: the power to put one's self in another's place, to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. His piety was simple and natural. He was sometimes called a singular man—a *very* singular man. His singularity lay in taking the teachings of Christ literally. He obeyed without questioning. And never was he troubled with doubt as to what the Master's will was. His eye being single, the whole body was full of light.

A character like that of Uncle Eben never comes to maturity without trial. It needs the

touch of suffering to make it mellow. It seemed to many as if he had sounded all the depths of sorrow. But nothing was able to sour the milk of his sympathy, or to ruffle the serenity of his spirit. No one bruises a nettle for the fragrance that is in it, and if it pleased the Lord to bruise him it was because he expected to get something out of him by bruising him. Nor was he disappointed. Not more marvelous was the grace that transformed the son of thunder into the apostle of love than the grace which transformed this drunken ne'er-do-well into a living benediction.

XX

AN ANGEL BEHIND A MASK

A BOY was told that a ferocious dog would not bite him. "See how he wags his tail at you?" "Yes," replied the boy, "but I don't know which end of him I am to believe." This was the perplexity of many with regard to Elder Johnstone. They did not know which end of him to believe. They had an impression that his bark was worse than his bite, but how were they to know? He certainly had a forbidding aspect. He generally turned his worse side out to the world. Only his most intimate friends suspected that he had another and a better side. The truth is he was an artful deceiver. He lived a double life. Not until after he was dead did people dream of the skilful way in which he had masqueraded before them.

Elder Johnstone had always been a reticent man. After his wife's death he drew still further into his shell and became a mysterious man. He dismissed the faithful housekeeper who had

taken charge of things during his wife's illness, and lived quite alone. He had no children, and his relatives said that he froze them out, evidently preferring their absence to their company. With the exception of an occasional house-cleaning by the wife of his renter, he did all his own housework, down to washing and mending his own clothes. All this was put down to the score of parsimony, for he was known to be a wealthy man. "A regular old miser" was the epithet by which he was commonly described.

His life moved on in this way for several years, until one day, David Bain, a hunchback boy, came hobbling up the lane leading to his house, and knocked with his crutch on the door. "Mr. Johnstone," he said, "my brother's wife has turned me out of house and home, and I am come to stay with you."

The Elder replied in a gruff voice, but with a look in the corner of his eye that belied its gruffness: "I think, David, you might have asked me first if I wanted you; but as you have made up your mind to storm my castle, I suppose that the sooner I yield the better."

He knew how harshly the poor cripple was

dealt with, and he had more than once been on the point of speaking a kind word to him to sweeten the bitterness of his spirit. This unspoken sympathy the quick eye of the cripple had detected, and it had made him bold to throw himself upon his compassion. From that moment the cripple crept into the Elder's heart. All the pent-up love of a rich, fatherly nature was lavished upon the boy. Between the two grew up the closest comradeship. David developed into an excellent housekeeper. He cooked appetizing meals and kept the house in apple-pie order. When the work of the day was over, the Elder would read to him from his well-stored library, or he would give him lessons on the violin, or play with him a game of chess. Sometimes the poor boy, into whose hard life the first rays of brightness had come, would nestle close to him and say: "I like you better than God." "Oh, do not say that, Davie; I hope you will find out one day that God is better than He is pictured to be, and that all human love is only a faint reflection of His infinite love." When any one happened to call, or when the two were in public, the Elder made a show of being stern and

severe with the cripple. People thought that the poor boy, in leaving his sister-in-law, had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. They expended upon him a great deal of needless pity. David himself inwardly chuckled at the way in which they were hoodwinked.

There was only one man in the district who had more than an inkling of the secret of the Elder's life. That was the village doctor. He knew how tender the Elder had been of his frail wife, how assiduously he had nursed her during her long illness, how quick he had been to fulfil her slightest wish or most unreasonable whim, while putting on before others a look of icy unconcern which gave him the name of a hard-hearted husband. So it was with regard to the cripple. The doctor had even caught him red-handed in an act of deception. Late one evening, as he was driving past his house, he heard the sound of a violin, accompanied by uproarious laughter. He tied his horse to a hitching-post, approached the house cautiously, and looked in by the window through an opening in the close-drawn curtains. The sight which met his eyes struck him with amazement. The

Elder was playing the violin and singing a humorous song, while the cripple, perched upon a cushioned armchair, was beating time with his crutch and laughing as if his sides would split. "Can this be the demure, stern-visaged Elder, of whom the people stand in awe?" was the question which the doctor asked himself. Fishing up some plausible excuse for calling at this untimely hour, he knocked at the door. Instantly the music ceased, and when he entered the house the Elder was berating the cripple with angry words for making such a hideous noise with the cat. The familiar, sphinx-like look had returned to the Elder's face, but the lines of laughter were having difficulty in subsiding on the face of the cripple. "My! what a fine actor the Elder would have made," was the remark of the doctor to himself as he got into the buggy and rode home.

There were at times a mutter of dissatisfaction with Godfred Johnstone as a church officer. Not that any one could charge him with dereliction of duty. He was fidelity personified. He never missed any of the church services, nor any of the meetings of the church session. He was not a

liberal giver, but he gave what he considered his share of the expenses necessary for the support of the Gospel. But all criticism was instantly silenced by the doctor, who affirmed that the Elder was the best Christian in the parish. But even the doctor had to admit that he was close in money matters. He was reputed to be the wealthiest man in the district and also the greatest skinflint. College presidents and secretaries of missionary societies came from his home crestfallen. Sometimes they would bombard him in public, but he seemed to button himself up all the tighter when an appeal was made to his benevolence. His pastor was ambitious to have a new church building, but not a cent could be got out of him for the undertaking. His argument was that the old building was large and comfortable enough, and that the money could be better used than in erecting a building which would be expressive of pride rather than of devotion.

When the Elder died his will was a revelation. After providing comfortably for David Bain, all his estate was left for founding a home for crippled children. In a codicil to the will he mentioned the fact that all his life through he had

denied himself the pleasure of giving for other objects that he might have the more to leave for this one thing upon which his heart had been set.

It was the doctor who said: "Godfred Johnstone was an angel behind a mask. Now that the mask has dropped off you all know him as he is. In the place where he has gone they knew him all the time."

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